

27. *On the use of hyoscyamus in cerebral affections.* By G. G. SIGMONA, M. D.—Hyoscyamus has been said to be more useful in cerebral affections than opium, and this has led to its being indiscriminately employed in those states in which the latter drug is contraindicated; but you will find in all the stages, and in all the cases in which opium is prejudicial, that you will gain no advantage whatever from henbane. Thus, in inflammation of the brain, in arterial acceleration, or in venous retardation, it is not to be employed, except under circumstances which render it absolutely necessary to procure the refreshment of sleep after the proper depletions, for there is sometimes the most distressing state of watchfulness, which prevents all chance of recovery whilst it lasts, but when there is delirium, or mania, it must be avoided; indeed, Cullen goes further, he says, "It is more ready to give delirium than opium, and, therefore, we found it to give, in many cases, turbulence and unrefreshing sleep." The principal advantage to be derived from hyoscyamus is in cases where very great depression exists consequent upon some peculiar state of the brain and nervous system. In melancholy, in that sad state of gloom of mind which is called hypochondriasis, in lowness of spirits, in that almost unaccountable dejection which urges an individual to suicide, in the overwhelming debility which attends fevers, and more particularly that autumnal remittent which is prevalent in low, damp situations close to the water side, it is highly serviceable. You have often heard of the tendency to self-destruction about the month of November in this country, and you will constantly meet with cases of individuals of high intellectual attainments, of great powers of mind, nay, under ordinary circumstances, of great strength of soul, who have an undefinable sense of danger, who are fearful of committing some frightful act, and this sensation haunts them at every step; during the day they are miserable and wretched; the night brings no repose, and life, instead of carrying with it joy, peace, and contentment, is a source of misery and wretchedness. Now, if you trace these cases, you will find that many of them are amongst those who have spent their time in the country, or in the neighbourhood of a town close to some stagnant water during the fall of the leaf; a miasma has been generated, which has produced an almost imperceptible fever, which, to use a common expression, has "fallen upon the nerves," and this hangs upon the person, occasionally for a considerable time, producing the most marked depression. I have just had under my care, with a most intelligent general practitioner, two cases of this nature in the same family; the dejection of mind, the loss of appetite, the unwillingness, nay, the incapability of action, the despondency, were of a nature to excite great apprehension; still there was no pain, no bodily suffering, no actual complaint made; they both had arisen from the same cause, and we soon discovered it, and were fortunate enough to restore, very quickly, to their anxious friends, the sufferers from slow nervous fever. The change of air that is so often recommended is of service from the removal of the individual from the exciting cause. Quinine, or iron, for this state, is the remedy during the day, but hyoscyamus, in the very worst states, is the soporific which produces the desired effect, and, at the same time, excites the nervous system.—*Ibid.*

28. *Hyoscyamus in nervousness.* By G. G. SIGMONA, M. D.—In all those cases which are called "nervous," you will find more relief from the employment of this herb than from most other medicines. It is true that there are few terms more commonly used, both in and out of the profession, than "nervous;" it is a word which has acquired great numbers of significations, and many people at the same time profess not to understand what it means; they "hiss their stars" that they were born before nerves were invented." Certainly, to speak of "being nervous" is a mode of expression which is very indefinite, from the use that is made of it, but which, if properly applied, carries to the mind a very forcible impression of a peculiar state, for which we have no very appropriate language. Unfortunately, the same word has been long employed to express two states in direct opposition to each other: thus, we talk of a strong, weighty argument, delivered with boldness and energy, and in appropriate language, as "a nervous speech," and the orator as "full of nerve," whilst we, on the other hand, say that the individual who delivers himself with timidity, with hesitation, and distrust of his own power, is "highly nervous;" we regret that his "good sense was overpowered by his nerves." In the first instance, we mean to say that there is a tension and strength

of nerve; in the latter, that there is a laxity and weakness of nerve; yet, by some strange anomaly in our mode of expressing our ideas, we apply the same adjective to both these states of the nervous system.

*Nervousness* may, however, be defined to be a state of morbid sensibility, and this is displayed in a thousand different ways, according to the age, to the sex, to the temperament, to the habits of life, to the condition of society in which the individual is placed. The people in this country are altogether more predisposed to this state, than is to be found elsewhere; this may be partly owing to the climate, to the anxieties which arise out of the peculiar habits of life, and to our moral and social condition. There is not all times a great sensitiveness in the English character, and also that of another kind, in the Irish, which most materially affects the mental and bodily health, and predisposes to the morbid sensibility of which I speak. In the latter nation it is more transient; the impressions are never lasting; they are creatures of impulse; feelingly alive to every sensation, they quickly exhibit their passions, and as soon forget the cause of excitement, unless they instantly act upon it. There never was an Irishman who presented himself to a hospital or a dispensary, who did not complain of an impression about his heart, which, translated out of its figurative language, means that he has what we technically term, "an anxiety about the præcordia," one of the most marked of the features of a nervous state. Every thing sinks deeper upon the mind of an Englishman; he is quite as sensitive, but the impression is more lasting; he ponders, he revolves everything within him; if he be ill he thinks only of his feelings; he becomes morbidly sensitive of every change; he loses his spirits, he is oppressed with a strange fear, which is attended with a degree of anxiety; he ceases to look forward with hope; every present difficulty is magnified; and so the body partakes of the morbid condition of the mind, and this is exhibited in many various ways, of which the want of sleep is one of the most characteristic symptoms, besides various signs which rank under the name of hypochondriasis; for this condition hyoscyamus is particularly adapted, not only to procure sleep, but to tranquillize the frame, to soothe the disordered spirits, and (whilst tonic remedies give strength to the muscles and to the organs generally) to impart to the nervous system a repose and quiescence, which, I think, can be obtained from no other source with the same quickness, certainty, and general good effect.

That this medicine has some peculiar stimulating effect upon the mind, is proved from the acknowledged fact, that it produces a most extraordinary species of excitement; under its influence the mildest and the gentlest beings become highly irascible, and subject to uncontrollable fits of anger. Patients who have taken it, and not in large quantities, have been known, upon the slightest provocation, to fly into most violent passions, and to become perfectly, but fortunately momentarily, mad with rage. Of the subjects that excite the attention of the medical philosopher, none can be more striking than the marvellous influence of some small portion of an herb, or a mineral, upon that reasoning power which elevates man above all the objects of this wondrous creation. A minute quantity of the juice which exudes from the poppy will clear the intellect, will elevate the mind, and will impart to it energy and vigour. Part of a leaf of the henbane will urge him on to violence and to passion; a small quantity of belladonna will impair his memory; a little hemlock will render him stupid.—*Ibid.*

29. *Hyoscyamus in diseases of the genital organs.* By G. G. SIGMOND, M. D.—Among the diseases in which hyoscyamus is found to be particularly serviceable are, affections of the neck of the bladder, irritable states of that organ, chordee, when there is great and acute pain in the neck of the bladder and about the pubes, whether it arises from a retention of urine, or, as Pott supposes, from irritation attended with spasm, for sometimes where the pain is most acute, on passing the catheter no urine is to be found; for this combination of camphor and hyoscyamus is invaluable; and to Mr. Benjamin Bell we are indebted for the recommendation of this practice. Camphor alone is not to produce many very uncomfortable and even distressing symptoms, nausea, heartburn, tremors; yet, when properly combined with hyoscyamus, it is perfectly free from any evil influence. Three grains of camphor to two grains of henbane, was a favourite remedy of Mr. Bell, and on some occasions he added either a grain of capsicum, or one of ipecacuan. The relief afforded by a few drops of the tincture of hyoscyamus, not more than